

Parents & Education.

Apr 1883

Many Parents have, on the whole, a curious way of regarding the subject of Education. For more than a quarter of a century, Education has been pretty constantly & pretty prominently before us. ^{through} and many educational leaders have been going far & fast - not by ~~however~~, have, on the whole, held aloof. Parents, at any rate, not by parents as such. But are content to stand round and gaze on the play, ^{any idea of that until} ~~but that they know~~ - thing definite ^{has come} out of this - the 'Modern Side', the 'High School', the 'Kinder Garten', the Universities' Local Examinations - ~~parents come in to join~~ ^{when they are ready to} the new thing. ~~their~~ very hearty & unflinching support, provided it commend itself to their common sense. In a word, Education is a commodity subject to its chance in the market-like other commodities. The parent chooses, pays, & has a right to find if he doesn't get the value of his money. How the 'goods' are produced is not his business. If the schoolmaster, or philanthropic outsider, take a deal of trouble to secure for him the best conceivable article for his purposes, why, is much the better for him. But, in any case, he does not feel called upon to interfere with the production, when the article is marketable, he is ready to deal with passing liberality. Well, & as a matter of fact, the education offered by the schools is a marketable commodity, & as such, subject to the common laws of supply & demand. So far, there is nothing to be said against the attitude taken up by parents. Nevertheless, two fallacies underlie this commercial view of the thing: (1) that Education 'belongs

Appendix

Which some of you must - do our best to answer. We hope, too, to achieve at least one cottage field excursion in the summer; & to add to our winter work a Mothers' ^{Class} Meeting for the consideration of some questions of infant management.

This is, roughly, our programme for the ensuing winter. It may be our way to more work than ~~that~~ ^{we} pledge ourselves to. For instance, we may be able to secure one or two public lectures from educationists. ~~perhaps~~ ^{perhaps} may set on foot work under an Examination Scheme. It has been well said that "the mind can know nothing which it cannot produce in answer to a question put by the mind to itself." By way of ascertaining what one really & definitely knows upon a given subject, questions put by other minds have their use. Possibly some parents will be found willing to undertake a definite course of reading in education - its kindred sciences with a view to examination. ~~the many~~ ^{Further} delightful visions loom in the distance - hardly yet within measurable distance. We may live, as a society, to see ourselves possessed of an educational lending library; may see the issue of educational tracts which should make it easy to disseminate a knowledge of the principles of education as based upon natural law. And who knows but some of you may live to engage ~~our~~ ^{our} nurses from a training home where women of some cultivation are taught the ^{natural} laws ~~under which~~ in obedience to which a child grows up, healthy, happy, intelligent & good? And, what is equally to be desired, where nursery governesses should learn the why, & the what, & the how to set about it, of their calling.

A little R.E.U. work remains to be done in the summer months. Children ^{should} get quite the most valuable part of their ~~education~~ ^{education} in the open air. They should be on speaking terms with every sort of natural object to be met with in a radius of, say ten or twenty miles of their homes. Every child ought to know an elm from a beech, any hawk from a dandelion, the male from the female blackbird, a moth from a butterfly. Scientific knowledge is not wanted at this stage, but what Professor Huxley calls 'common information' - which, by the way, is not ~~very~~ ^{too} common - It is from his parents the child should get this sort of information, ~~for~~ ^{by} ~~knowing~~ ^{knowing} how eagerly every child takes to the lore of the fields how soon shall we teach what we do not know, & above all, all wish to extend our acquaintance in this direction. There is more work for the R.E.U. A couple of field excursions every year under the lead of a naturalist, with opportunities for asking questions, note-books, blotting pads for specimens, should give us at least a few or two new acquaintances every year which we may in our turn introduce to the children. That is more, should we initiate us into that art of seeing, which is, beyond comparison the most valuable acquirement - we have it in our power to confer.

The programme for Section B. - working men & their wives - should be in the principles the same as for A. The schoolroom or large meetings must be fewer, because there are no less 'leisured' members of the Society. We should have two winter meetings, with addresses or papers dealing in a practical popular way with some topic connected with sanitation, morals, or the religious bringing up of children. Here we shall doubtless get very practical discussion of the papers, every likely, pressing questions will be propounded in the space of the moment which

^{W. H. St. John}
◆ is the minnager, cut by that traditionary boy who had to
- stay 'up' for his holidays; + cut the labyrinth - kept in order
by after generations of Winchester boys - wrote "Dulce Domum",
spined, spined, + one day, crawled down to sit under
the great elm by the river-side, at the point now called
Domum Wharf, the tree was called the Domum tree, for
that unhappy schoolboy laid him down +
died: thus, the legend; the last the antiquaries
say, that the minnager was one of those "Chemins
de Jerusalem" contrived by the priests for the
punishment + punishment of those who shirked
going to go on pilgrimage.
